

THE BLIND DO IT BETTER

Enid Griffis

HV1711 G 65

HV1711
G65



**M.C. MIGEL LIBRARY
AMERICAN PRINTING
HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

THE BLIND DO IT BETTER

ENID GRIFFIS



IN THE face of the growing shortage of manpower for essential war industries we are just beginning to become aware of a tight little reservoir of competent, dependable labor that has been waiting for years to be tapped—the blind workers of this country.

The moment the word "blind" is mentioned there leaps to the mind of most of us the picture of a white-haired man laboriously caning chairs or binding corn straw for brooms; a woman with patient, resigned face, bent over a loom; a boy shuffling through the streets with sightless eyes, playing old tunes on a wheezy accordion; or merely a figure in dark glasses standing at a street corner with a bundle of pencils and a tin cup. Few of us realize that outside and beyond these familiar types are thousands of men and women trained and skilled for work in professional fields, business, industry, or agriculture, and that all of them are eager for an opportunity to prove their worth. Not only can they perform certain tasks just as well as the seeing, despite their obvious and burdensome handicap; actually they can and do perform many of them *better*. This is clear from the reports of foremen, supervisors, and factory heads in all parts of the country where blind men and women are now being employed in war work.

There is, for example, the case of a blind inspector of shells in a large arms factory

in Connecticut. Since he was placed on regular production last May this man has maintained a perfect record. In all that time not one bad shell has slipped through his sensitive fingers, and his foreman has said he would like to use this blind employee as a model for the instruction of new operators.

Some months ago a large motors corporation in Texas employed a blind man to work on the "burr bench" detecting and removing "burrs" or rough spots left on metal parts by swift-boring mechanical drills. To-day that man, because of his unerring accuracy, has been appointed supervisor of his department to check the deburring work of a long line of fully sighted workers.

Last June an aviation corporation in New York hired a blind girl as an inspector in the rotor and stator department of its factory. The work consisted of running the fingers over the edges of small steel disk laminations to detect bends, rough spots, cuts, dents, or buckles. By November both the superintendent and the foreman of the plant had no hesitation in stating that her work was definitely superior to that of the thirty-seven sighted girls working at the same task.

Last August a manufacturing plant in New Jersey ran into a serious bottleneck. It could obtain no steel precision gages for measuring the mica spacers used in electrical condensers which, in turn, are needed

and save the world" statement to a Senate committee, and from then on the change was swift.

While the tone of the magazine was being transposed to a key more in harmony with the times there were inevitable indications that the editors were feeling their way. These ranged from some pretty gooey men-of-good-will bits in "Talk" to a strangely uncorseted profile of A. W. V. S. founder Mrs. Alice Throckmorton McLean by the usually crisp Janet Flanner. "We want our artists and idea men to give some thought," the editors wrote in January, 1941, "to the development of a political type of cartoon that will make pointed comment on the war. . . . We are ready to use serious drawings from time to time." And by September the artists were being reminded not to overlook such "America-near-war" phenomena as dollar-a-year men and isolationists.

Artists found some rather tentative bearings in the suburbs of the conflict—Gluyas Williams's series on The Nation's Capital and Helen Hokinson's ladies' club members in civilian defense. A few of the cartoonists—notably Alan Dunn—early got a satirical toehold on the armed forces. But *The New Yorker* has not yet been able to take the war in a confident stride.

In conversation Ross and some members of his staff brush aside any suggestion that the magazine has had to reckon with a crisis in editorial policy, but the evidence is clear. In one of the first bulletins to be sent out after Pearl Harbor the editors reminded their artists that "*The New*

Yorker's problems in these times are perhaps more difficult than those of any other publication." They had managed—despite some occasional weird lapses—to produce satirical reporting which without meanness was nevertheless obsidian-hard. They drew as fine and deadly a bead as anybody in the business. The job was not an easy one before the war; in our present situation it would require a company of stainless-steel Voltaires.

One way out has been to turn increasingly to factual, non-interpretive reporting on military and naval themes, types of weapons and so on—a safe area which also has the virtue of interesting the fact-hungry wartime public. This factual turn is congenial to Ross, whose appetite for information has always run a close second to his appetite for disaster. But such material isn't humor. The Army pieces that E. J. Kahn sends back from New Guinea have their merits—the *Infantry Journal* commends them highly—but they are not in the old-time Ross groove. More sober reporting was never seen. In *The New Yorker* they seem like material that keeps the old ball in play and no more.

But Ross's energy is as explosive as ever, and if anybody can bludgeon unlikely journalistic neophytes into walking the tightrope between annoying flippancy and dull earnestness it is he. And maybe the crisis won't be perpetual. We notice, by the way, that in laying out its program for 1943 *The New Yorker* announced in urgent capitals that it needs, RIGHT NOW, ideas for a peace cover, ready to use on short notice.

in every plane, tank, ship, and jeep that rolls off the assembly lines. At the suggestion of the New Jersey Commission for the Blind they were persuaded to try out a young blind girl on the job. To their amazement they discovered that she could quickly gage the thickness of the inch-square separators with a tolerance of only .0005 of an inch; that her performance was more accurate even than the mechanical gages devised to do this type of work; and that within a week her production record was 25 per cent above that of any other girl on the job. Already more than one hundred blind men and women are employed at gaging and sorting mica in shops and factories throughout the country.

A blind man hired last August 11th to weld speakers in one of the nation's biggest radio factories achieved by October 8th a production record of 2,000 speakers welded in a single day—a figure 600 above the average for the plant.

The list of jobs in industry in which blind workers are excelling is surprisingly long. It includes such work as packing, assembling, shell loading, flush-pin gaging, shell inspection, rivet sorting, quartz grinding, wire stripping and retinning, burr detection and removal, drill-press operating, power-press operating (where it is not necessary to place the hand under the die), kick-press operating, lathing (when worked to definite stops), and welding. And the range of possibilities is even wider than this.

For example, a car and foundry company on the West Coast employs a blind man to put bolts into wooden rails which then go into the main assembly line in the production of refrigeration cars. A radio corporation employs a blind man to assemble one of the most intricate dial assemblies which the company produces. He is one of the few men in the department to whom this particular work can be assigned because of the exceptional demands its special nature makes on the sense of touch. An air depot in New York is using several blind persons to load film magazines for use on aircraft cameras. And one aircraft corporation in Kansas City has four blind workers on its payroll—two men and two women. One of the

girls operates a stakon power machine which fastens terminals on the ends of wire, while the other works a one-shot riveter on subassembly. One of the men operates a tube-flaring machine; the other is employed on a precision job assembling bomb releases.

And there are still further possibilities which as yet are unexplored. For example, at present there is no record of a blind man in this country ever having been employed to fit instruments into the instrument boards of airplanes; but in England a young airman, blinded in the war, is fitting 20 airplane boards per day, as compared with a maximum of 17 achieved by his sighted co-workers.

II

OBVIOUSLY the blind workers' greatest asset in such work is their highly developed sense of touch. But there are many other factors which combine to make them particularly desirable employees. For one thing, they have greater powers of concentration. This is due partly to the absence of temptation in the form of visual distractions, and partly to their need for focusing full attention on the operation in hand when the sense of touch must be substituted for the sense of sight.

Then too, because of the limitation which blindness automatically imposes on freedom of physical movement, blind men and women early learn care and precision in their movements and orderliness in their working habits. You will seldom find a sightless worker indulging in waste motion or misplacing his tools or working equipment. This means time saved, greater economy of movement and effort, and a higher rate of production.

Again, the average blind person actually possesses a greater store of physical energy to put into his work. Dammed in other directions, this energy is channeled directly and fully into his job and results in a steady, consistent, and efficient day-after-day performance.

One of the main objections to the employment of blind people in the past has been that they might have accidents. Actually the record shows that they are the

safest workers in the world. So far not one case of compensable accident involving a blind worker has been reported from any of the many plants and factories in which they are employed! The reason is that they exercise greater care in their movements, evidence a quicker recoil from obstacles, and possess a keener sense of potential danger than do people with sight.

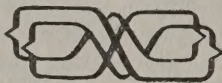
Employers in all fields have long agreed that one of the greatest factors in determining the desirability or undesirability of an employee is his attitude toward his job. Is his only interest in his weekly pay check, or does he regard work as a privilege, and his own particular job as an opportunity to perform a useful service?

If it is ever safe to generalize, then certainly it is safe to say that this latter is the attitude of *all* blind workers. The explanation is simple. Ask any blind person to name the greatest hardship which his handicap imposes, and he will reply without hesitation: "Idleness, inactivity, the inability to obtain employment." To him, this, and not the lack of sight in itself, is the black curse of blindness. A job is to him more than a means of livelihood: it is a godsend.

Make no mistake on this count. Give a blind man a job and you can know that

he will give that job the best that is in him. And his presence, far from depressing the workers about him, will actually strengthen their morale. The evidence is that there is something about the mere presence among them of a person working industriously, painstakingly, and cheerfully despite a severe handicap, which shames normal men and women out of petty grumbling and complaining, makes them more conscious of their own blessings, and inspires them to greater effort. So marked has been this effect that many employers have expressed the opinion that, if for no other reason than this, every department where a suitable job can possibly be found should employ at least one blind worker.

If there is a single completely encouraging result of our grave manpower shortage, it is the way in which it has brought to fruition the long labors of State commissions and other workers for the blind, who have been training these people, trying to persuade factory and office heads to employ them, and keeping a supervisory eye on them once they were employed. This has always been an uphill job, for employers were very skeptical. Now, at last, the opportunities are opening up and the blind are coming into their own.



HV1711

c. 3

G

Griffis, Enid

The blind do it better,

Date Due

c. 13

HV1711

G

Griffis, Enid

AUTHOR

The blind do it better.

TITLE

DATE
LOANED

BORROWER'S NAME

PAMPHLET BINDERS

This is No. 1527

also carried in stock in the following sizes

HIGH	WIDE	THICKNESS	HIGH	WIDE	THICKNESS
1523 9 inches	7 inches	1 1/2 inch	1529 12 inches	10 inches	1 1/2 inch
1524 10 "	7 "	"	1530 12 "	9 3/4 "	"
1525 9 "	6 "	"	1532 13 "	10 "	"
1526 9 3/4 "	7 1/4 "	"	1533 14 "	11 "	"
1527 10 1/2 "	7 3/4 "	"	1534 16 "	12 "	"
1528 11 "	8 "	"			

Other sizes made to order.

MANUFACTURED BY

LIBRARY BUREAU

Division of REMINGTON RAND INC.

Library Supplies of all kinds

